

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

Applicants:	Linda B. Vanderwold, et al.)	
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Serial No.:	09/454,173)	Art Unit: 2626
)	Examiner: Qi Han
Filing Date:	December 2, 1999)	
)	
For:	Style-Checking Method and)	
	Apparatus for Business Writing)	
)	

October 30, 2007
Sacramento, CA 95814

Mail Stop Amendment
Commissioner for Patents
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, VA 22313-1450

DECLARATION OF LINDA B. VANDERWOLD
UNDER 37 C.F.R. SECTION 1.132 IN RESPONSE TO
OFFICE ACTION MAILED MAY 3, 2007

1. I am the owner of VanWrite Writing Consultants, a company which delivers seminars to government clients on the VanWrite® method, described in this patent application. I am also vice-president and a co-founder of VanLindon Training Methods, Inc., a company which delivers seminars on the VanWrite® method to private sector clients, and develops and produces VanWrite retail products. I have a Bachelor of Arts in English and a Standard Secondary Teaching Credential in English from University of California, Davis. I taught senior high school English from 1972-1990. During that time, I was appointed by the California State Superintendent of Schools to the Model Curriculum Standards Task Force and had significant responsibility for developing high school writing standards.

2. In 1990, Price Waterhouse engaged me to determine why some of their writing was strong and communicated successfully, and other writing was weak and difficult to understand. I reviewed and analyzed scores of documents, some the staff had written and some they had received. I detected patterns in both the strong and the weak writing. Those patterns became the basis of the VanWrite® method described in this patent application.

3. Business writers must convey information clearly and efficiently. In order to do this, they must communicate in a way that will be understood the first time their writing is read. A typical businessperson has little time to read and is inundated with paper. If the writer's message is not clearly and concisely communicated, it will be ignored.

This problem is exacerbated by the increasing use of email. Email is the most popular form of written business communication worldwide and has made a writer out of every person in the office. Entire business transactions are conducted through email, and rarely does another set of eyes see the email before the writer sends the message. Business writers frequently do not think carefully when they compose email. Further, email writers do not think about their written message from the viewpoint of the reader. Instead email writers react and type as quickly as possible with little or no proofreading or editing. In reality, email is not careful deliberate written communication.

Repeatedly, several studies have shown that lengthy documents do not impress the reader; in fact, excessively wordy documents have very few readers. This is because everyone has too much to read, and we read very quickly.

Poor business writing directly affects the profitability of a business. The National Commission on Writing released a report in 2004 entitled "Writing: A Ticket to Work ... Or a Ticket Out – A Survey of Business Leaders." The Commission concluded that strong writing is a mandatory business skill, and reported that corporate America spends \$3.1 billion per year on writing training for employees.

4. Existing methods of teaching business writing focus on grammar and spelling, or provide tips or templates for writing. The problem is that these tips or

templates are too vague or general to actually help writers write more clearly. In contrast, the VanWrite® method is a specific, objective, reliable method that teaches clear business writing and editing. One aspect of the VanWrite® method is set forth in pending claims 49-57 and 59-64. These claims describe a software method for editing that enables business writers to edit as quickly as they write; additionally, the software method alerts writers to particular constructions that decrease reader comfort (i.e., constructions that readers find difficult to read). (See specification, pages 1-3 and figure 3B.) A decrease in reader comfort (or an increase in reader discomfort) results in the reader putting the document aside because the writing is not comfortable to read. Constructions that decrease reader comfort include: **weak verbs** (which force the writer to use many more words, frequently padded with prepositional phrases, to establish relationships in the sentence); **strings of prepositional phrases** (which contribute to wordiness and are skipped or skimmed by readers); and **a prepositional phrase between the subject and the verb** (which often results in a grammatically incorrect sentence that is unclear). (See specification, page 2.)

Claim 49 requires functions that achieve clarity, conciseness, and reader comfort, and includes steps that identify a prepositional phrase between a subject and a verb and instruct the writer to rearrange the sentence structure. The claims that depend from claim 49 include steps that address and correct the constructions that decrease reader comfort referred to above. Claims 50, 52, 56, 57, and 61 include steps that identify weak verbs and instruct the writer to replace them with strong verbs. Claims 53-55 include steps that identify strings of prepositional phrases and instruct the writer to break up the string. Claims 59 and 60 include steps that identify a transition word between a subject and a verb and instruct the writer to rearrange the sentence structure. Claim 64 includes all of these steps to increase reader comfort.

5. The VanWrite® method, as claimed in claims 49-57 and 59-64, is embodied in software that my co-inventor, Donald Hallberg, and I developed. I have taught the VanWrite® method and the use of the software at over 1,800 paid seminars, in both at the private and public sectors. Mr. Hallberg and I have produced a DVD training

series and an interactive e-learning program that have been sold worldwide. To date, we have issued 3,155 software licenses totaling more than \$200,000 in revenue.

6. I have received many positive written evaluations from users of the VanWrite® method and software. Some of the specific comments are:

- “VanWrite® really breaks down writing and the final outcome is amazing.” (California Lottery staff.)
- VanWrite® is “easy, and straight to the point.” (California Lottery staff.)
- “This method of writing can greatly improve my communications.” (California Department of Pesticide Regulation staff.)
- “This program comes with useful software.” (California Department of Pesticide Regulation staff.)
- “This program gives me more confidence about writing. I finally understand sentence structure.” (California Department of Pesticide Regulation staff.)
- “Engineers appreciate the objectivity of the VanWrite® method.” (Blackburn Consulting, Inc.)
- “I want to thank you for the outstanding writing workshop...You provided invaluable information...All of us.... have already put to use the VanWrite® writing method.” (Daniel Lungren, Attorney General, State of California; Carolyn Ortiz, Department of Justice, State of California.)
- “The VanWrite® method...allows its followers to edit and revise in confidence.” (Chan and Company, CPAs.)
- “Your VanWrite® method saved hours of revising time...Everyone’s writing improved...” (FamiliesFirst.)
- “Our employees not only grasped your ‘Reader Comfort’ principles, but immediately began to practice and share them....The letters and memos produced for my signature today are clear and concise. I no longer need to

spend hours editing or re-writing.” (California State and Consumer Services Agency.)

7. We recently conducted a written survey of persons who have used the VanWrite® method and software. The survey asked respondents to mark “agree,” “disagree,” or “undecided” with respect to statements about the method and software. The survey was mailed to 40 people in September 2007. To date, we have received 19 responses. The survey results are as follows:

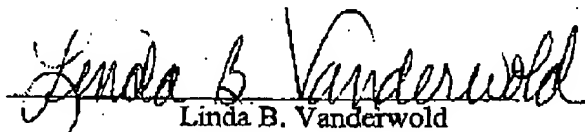
- 100% agreed that our method and software helped them in their business writing.
- 95% agreed that our method and software increased the clarity and conciseness of their writing; the remaining 5% were undecided.
- 100% agreed that our method and software help make their writing easier to read.
- 95% agreed that our method and software increased the reader comfort of their writing audience; 5% were undecided.
- 100% agreed that they were surprised by the positive results the method and software had on their writing.
- 71% agreed that other software products have not helped them improve their writing clarity as much as our method and software; 29% were undecided.
- 74% agreed that other software products helped with spelling, grammar, and word choice, but did not present an effective method to help them improve their business writing; 26% were undecided.
- 79% agreed that our method and software addressed business writing problems better than existing methods and products; 21% were undecided.
- 79% agreed that they have long wanted a product that helped improve writing clarity and did not find one until they discovered our method and software; 21% were undecided.

- 95% agreed that our method and software identified sentence constructions that decreased writing clarity and suggested specific remedies to improve clarity; 5% were undecided.
- 94% agreed that our method and software identified sentence constructions that increased writing clarity so they could understand their writing strengths; 6% were undecided.
- 100% agreed that I have accurately identified clarity problems in business writing, while others have not effectively identified those problems before.
- 100% agreed that our method provides specific guidelines that are easy to understand and apply, rather than general writing tips.

8. In 2001, Dun and Bradstreet evaluated VanWrite® Writing Consultants for customer satisfaction using a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being the highest rating. They rated VanWrite® 1.1 overall. Consistently, 97% of our users rate our programs method and software as excellent. Many have asked: "Why didn't someone teach us this before?"

9. I hereby state that all statements made herein of my own knowledge are true and that all statements made on information and belief are believed to be true; and further that these statements were made with the knowledge that willful false statements and the like so made are punishable by fine or imprisonment, or both, under section 1001 of Title 18 of the United States Code.

Dated: October 30, 2007


Linda B. Vanderwold